



## PRESS RELEASE

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### Food For Thought

Mesa County School District 51 and the Mesa County Department of Human Services are excited to announce their new Food for Thought program.

Food for Thought brings parents into their child's learning process by helping them with the primary concern of putting food on the table. Central Cluster Director, Rudy Malesich, created the program to assist parents in helping their children at home to learn at the highest possible levels in school. Parents learn hands-on, practical methods from certified teachers and actually take home a homework help kit. "There has to be a win-win situation in any partnership; therefore, the question was, How can we help parents to satisfy their needs?" wondered Malesich

The answer to that question is to give parents the tools they need to help their children. During the evening sessions, parents will be able to access all of the health and human services they need, attend accountability meetings, pick up a homework help kit, and enjoy a meal served by teachers and administrators. The parents will then receive food coupons to City Market for attending and participating in all that is offered that evening.

Parents can also receive additional food certificates for agreeing to work with their kids at home, visit teachers and the principal every six weeks at school, and spend one-on-one time weeks with their child, discussing their learning goals and responsibilities. When necessary, program officials will provide transportation to and from the school for the visits every six weeks, and work with businesses to allow parents paid time off for necessary meetings.

This program is currently being piloted at four elementary schools: Dos Rios, Columbine, Clifton and Shelledy.

"The belief behind this innovative program", states Tom Papin, Executive Director of the Mesa County Department of Human Services, "is that the more involved parents are in their children's education, the more successful those children will be in school. This is significant, because we have found that a lack of education is the common denominator among families who have long-term dependence on welfare. Therefore, it seems to reason that, if more kids successfully complete high school, there will be less dependence on the welfare system." Malesich agrees, adding, "The key to our success thus far is the partnership our district has with the Department of Human Services and our schools instructional staff."

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